

Neighborhood Planning Kit



City of Lake Oswego
Planning Division
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Preface

The intent of the Neighborhood Planning Kit is to provide a clear and easy-to-follow guide for Lake Oswego Neighborhoods as they work with City staff to prepare their Neighborhood Plan. The recommended approach is not a rigid formula, but a suggested methodology based on the experiences of previous neighborhoods that can be adapted to meet the needs of your neighborhood association. We encourage neighborhoods to bring their own creativity to the process.

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Introduction: The Neighborhood Planning Program

Background

The City of Lake Oswego recognizes that different areas of the City have their own identity and character. The neighborhood planning program was developed to provide a forum for neighbors to resolve a broad range of issues so that as change occurs, livability will be enhanced. Since the Neighborhood Planning program was approved by City Council in 1993, six neighborhood plans have been approved by the City Council. This document applies lessons learned to help incoming neighborhoods as they begin the planning process.

What is a Neighborhood Plan?

A neighborhood plan is a document that describes a detailed vision for the future of a neighborhood.

An effective neighborhood plan will create detailed goals and strategies for reaching that vision. Ideally, neighborhood plans are created by the people who live, work and play in that neighborhood. Approval of a neighborhood plan requires careful review and acceptance by a majority of people in a neighborhood and also by the Planning Commission and the City Council. In that way, it is a commitment by all those involved to work toward the vision it embodies.

Impact on City Policy

A neighborhood plan in of itself is not a binding agreement or contract. It is a set of general principals and recommendations for action. A good plan will be explicit about the steps necessary to implement its goals and the people who must be involved to make it happen. Neighborhood plans get implemented only when neighbors, with assistance from their neighborhood planners, work to get the plan's recommendations acted upon by the appropriate parties.

Some neighborhood plans will lead to the development of new City policies or regulations, but the results of every plan will be different based on the unique needs of that neighborhood and the people who are involved.

*Organizing is what you
do before you do
something so that when
you do it, it is not all
mixed up.*

-A.A. Milne



Relationship to the City of Lake Oswego Comprehensive Plan

The City's Comprehensive Plan and neighborhood plans have a lot in common. They are both a statement about an area's intentions for the future. The Lake Oswego Comprehensive Plan is the guiding land use document for the City. It contains goals and policies that the neighborhood has agreed express a direction for the City into the future. Neighborhood plans approved prior to 2005 were adopted into the Comprehensive Plan as a specific area plan and shared the same format. However, neighbors found the need for more flexibility. For that reason, neighborhood plans now have a more flexible format that can be tailored to meet the needs of the individual neighborhood. Some neighborhood plans will identify new goals and policies for their area that will need to be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan because they address a subject which is not already there. That will occur as a separate action, with the assistance of City staff.

Table 1: Comparison between a Neighborhood Plan and a Comprehensive Plan

	The Comprehensive Plan	A Neighborhood Plan
Geography	The City	One neighborhood
Who creates it?	The City, with input from all citizens.	All those who live, work and play in the neighborhood.
What is it?	A document that describes a vision for the City and which will guide land use decisions.	Same.
What is included?	Streets and traffic, parking, housing, neighborhood character, natural resources, public facilities, utilities, and services.	Same. However, some neighborhood plans may choose to include additional subject areas.

The Purpose of a Neighborhood Plan

A neighborhood plan provides an articulated, shared vision to guide decision-making. Below is a list of some of the many ways neighborhood plans are used:

1. A Neighborhood Plan can provide an important communication link between citizens and city government by engaging citizens in local government planning and decision-making as it affects the development of their neighborhood.



2. The Plan can provide neighbors and the City with valuable information about the neighborhood's needs, priorities and desired projects.
3. The Plan can be used by neighborhood associations to determine if development proposals and land use changes are in accordance with the neighborhood's articulated, shared vision for the future.
4. Projects and programs identified in the Plan can be submitted to the City Council for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan, the Capital Improvement Plan and the City's budget process.
5. Neighbors, elected officials and staff can use it as a framework to guide their efforts and track progress.
6. It can also be an informational tool providing guidance to those deciding whether or not they want to live or invest in the neighborhood.

In addition, if the planning process has been truly inclusive, there are many side benefits of neighborhood planning. They may include increased citizen involvement, the development of leadership amongst neighbors, an increase in knowledge about the neighborhood and about local decision-making processes and procedures.

Roles and Responsibilities of Participants

Before developing a plan, it is helpful to identify the roles for all parties involved in the process, including neighborhood association leadership, staff in the Long Range Planning Division, and other neighborhood residents. The City suggests the following as a framework to clarify roles and responsibilities.

Role of Neighborhood Residents

1. Ask the Neighborhood Association to approve the creation of a Neighborhood Association Planning (NAP) committee.
2. Make sure that various neighborhood interests are represented including: property owners, renters, business owners, seniors, and youth.
3. Agree to allow NAP to create a plan based upon resident input.
4. Review and comment on the Neighborhood Plan document as it is made available. Let the NAP Committee know they are on the right track by attending meetings to provide input and vote on the plan.



5. Develop goals and policies to address identified problems in conjunction with City staff.
6. Advocate for the acceptance of the neighborhood plan by the Planning Commission and City Council.
7. Monitor the plan and make sure that proposed actions are carried out.
8. Inform new neighborhood and local business association members about the plan and encourage them to use it as a guide to better understand the neighborhood.

City Responsibilities

1. Provide a planner from the Long Range Planning Division to provide technical assistance in the development of the neighborhood plan.
2. Provide assistance with mailers and fliers to involve citizens in the planning process.
3. After completion of the plan and acceptance, use it, as directed, to guide decision making in the neighborhood.

Role of the Staff Planner

1. Provide the necessary technical information.
2. Value everyone's contribution. Guide discussion to allow equitable participation.
3. Provide information and resources to the committee about the neighborhood planning process and City policies.
4. Act as a liaison between City departments and the neighborhood association during the planning and implementation process, including providing copies of the draft plan to representatives of various City departments for review and comment.
5. Develop a work program with the neighborhood planning committee identifying major tasks, project milestones, neighborhood input points and establishing deadlines.
6. Assist the neighborhood in identifying assets and opportunities.
7. Assist in the development of goals and action charts.
8. Format and create the final planning document in a consistent format.
9. Assist with plan implementation.



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Getting Started

Is Your Neighborhood Ready?

The first step in creating a neighborhood plan is determining if your neighborhood is ready. A few questions will help determine whether enough participation and commitment exists within the neighborhood association to begin this process. An honest self-assessment will reduce time delays and allow participants to create a plan that reflects everyone's needs.

The following checklist can be helpful in determining the readiness of your neighborhood association to develop a neighborhood plan.

- ☒ Is there consensus within your organization about why a neighborhood plan is needed?
- ☒ Are there enthusiastic members willing to create a NAP Committee? Do they represent a broad range of interests in the neighborhood?
- ☒ Are the members of that committee ready to make a commitment to at least one year of regular meetings?
- ☒ Does your Neighborhood Association conduct regular meetings to encourage feedback from not only residents, but also businesses (if any) within the neighborhood boundaries?
- ☒ Are the members of the organization ready to work cooperatively with the City to create a plan?

Creating Enthusiasm

You can't create a good neighborhood plan alone. You'll need a wide variety of people involved to make it work. Educating residents about their role in the plan and building their enthusiasm can occur in several ways.

Here are some ideas:

- Assign block captains to speak with neighbors in a certain radius about the plan process and how they can get involved.
- Ask the neighborhood planner to speak at a general neighborhood or board meeting about the process.
- Work with the Neighborhood Planner to contact the media to advertise your plan process.



Face-to-face contact is the single most effective outreach strategy.

- Include updates of the neighborhood planning process in the Association's newsletter.
- Post the announcement on your neighborhood web page.
- Ask your neighborhood school to include an article in their school newsletter which is sent home with all students.
- Ask local news media to do a neighborhood story.
- Create a survey or other tool to collect ideas and information from neighbors who cannot attend a meeting or workshop.

The Neighborhood Association Planning Committee

A neighborhood association planning committee or NAP should be formed to guide the process, encourage broad participation from residents and interpret neighborhood input. This could consist of 5-9 members of the Neighborhood Association. The primary role of the Planning Committee is to guide the development of the plan and facilitate wide participation in the process.

Role of Planning Committee Members

1. Show respect for members: value everyone's contribution even if you disagree.
2. Make it acceptable to differ with the group.
3. Avoid interrupting and allow others to speak and give their opinions.
4. Come prepared: read minutes, reports, and other documents in advance.
5. Be ready to contribute your ideas and research.
6. Be ready to share the results of the assignment from the last meeting.
7. Arrange and organize, in coordination with City staff, regular meetings of the Planning Committee.
8. Co-sponsor, with the City, general meetings designed to disseminate information and to review and discuss major elements of the proposed neighborhood plan.
9. Obtain the approval and support of the neighborhood association for the proposed neighborhood plan.
10. Assist the City in the development and review of final recommendations for the Lake Oswego Planning Commission and City Council.



Role of the Planning Committee Chair

1. Encourage balanced participation by making sure everyone has a chance to speak or discuss the topic at hand. Avoid letting a few people dominate the meetings.
2. Deal with conflict in a timely manner. Don't let hard feelings simmer. Listen for an opportunity to clarify information. If things get hot, call a time out.
3. Value everyone's contribution even if you disagree. Make it acceptable to differ with the group. Guide discussions to allow equitable participation.

Suggestions:

The following suggestions may help make the Committee experience a fulfilling one for everyone involved:

1. The Selection Process

Approach potential committee members from a broad representation of the neighborhood's civic, business and neighbor groups. The Committee should reflect the diversity of the neighborhood. Encourage a balance of neighborhood members who represent a broad distribution within your neighborhood.

2. Explain the Commitment

When issuing the invitation, be specific about the time commitment and workload expected. Tell people how often you plan to meet. You want people to see the process through to the end.

3. Establish Ground Rules

Develop and agree upon a set of procedures. This important initial step not only builds trust but also sets expectations for the group. Ground rules attempt to make each Committee member's contribution valuable and, at the same time, move the group toward its goal. Ground rules should be simple, friendly and brief. It is best to create ground rules together at an early meeting of the group.

4. Set a Schedule

Establish a consistent meeting time and place in the beginning to avoid confusion later. Meetings should be accessible to all members of the Committee (within walking distance or on a bus route).

5. Keep Good Records

Appoint a dependable record keeper to keep accurate records of attendance, decisions and discussions.



6. Choose a Leader

Pick someone to chair the Committee. Pick someone who can demonstrate appropriate leadership skills and can keep the Committee on task.

7. Agree on How to Make Decisions

Decide whether to use a consensus or voting when difficult decisions arise. When it is time to make those decisions, abide by ground rules and the decision making process.

Representing Your Neighborhood

These three ideas will help you create a plan that represents all the different people in your neighborhood.

Never forget, just as the Comprehensive Plan represents the City, the Neighborhood Plan you create will represent your neighborhood and everyone who lives and works there. For that reason it is important that everyone have voice in the process. Keep this in mind every step of the way. During meetings, occasionally ask yourself, “Who isn’t represented here that should be?” and then seek input from those people. This way you can feel confident that your process represents the entire neighborhood. Another important thing to remember is that Planning Committee members represent more than just themselves at the table developing this plan. Try not to let your own ideas dominate the process.

Accept conflict as part of the process. Sometimes conflict can tell you something very important about the work you are doing. It might mean that there is a disagreement that needs to be worked through. If it is not addressed right away, it could fester and eventually erode the process. When conflict arises, don’t shy away, instead explore the conflict and identify its source. Ask these questions:

- What exactly is the disagreement about?
- Are there areas where you can find agreement?
- How can you reach a mutually acceptable solution?

Setting Goals and Creating a Work Plan

Just like in any big project, the first step is to set goals and create a work plan. Before the Planning Committee meets, make sure the neighborhood association has discussed the goals for the process. What are the anticipated outcomes? It is always good to define this



before you get started. It is up to the Planning Committee to create a schedule and work plan.

Plan in advance when to conduct neighborhood-wide meetings for the purpose of critique and comment. Allow plenty of time to accept input and incorporate it into the plan, then return to review changes with the group. Making sure everyone has a chance to comment might require more time than you'd expect. Allow space for delays and unplanned circumstances. It is better to factor more time into your schedule rather than less. You should plan on nine months to a year for production of a neighborhood plan.



3

The Work of Developing the Plan

The Neighborhood Assessment

After you have developed your goals for the planning process and discussed a schedule for the effort, it is time to begin collecting information. A neighborhood assessment will help you gather the information that will become the basis for your plan. The assessment will tell you what the people in your neighborhood think about the area; its strengths, and the impediments to positive change.

Opinions on how to collect this type of information vary. Be creative when formulating a plan for collecting information, because what works for other neighborhoods or communities might not always work for yours. Decide, based on your knowledge of the neighborhood what the most effective strategy will be.

Suggested Methods:

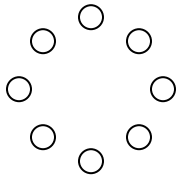
Asset Mapping involves documenting the tangible and intangible resources of a neighborhood, viewing it as a place with assets to be preserved and enhanced, not deficits to be remedied. Focusing on the negative or only on what's missing will not help you make positive change. **ABCD** encourages neighborhoods to conduct an assessment of the neighborhood's strengths. This approach instructs groups to look at the resources offered by individuals, associations and institutions in the neighborhood. Before looking outside for resources, look internally at the talents, strengths and untapped energy of the people in your neighborhood. An asset map might become a list of the assets in the neighborhood, or maybe a directory of people with a listing of the talents they can contribute to the planning process. Who is an architect or a landscaper? Who has skills with websites? Who has personal connections with organizations?

The asset-mapping concept can go beyond people to become a map of the physical features that make your neighborhood a special place. You can ask your neighbors to complete a survey, or maybe share a story to document this information, or ask them to draw their own map of the neighborhood recognizing the physical features that they think define the neighborhood. You might be surprised what you learn about your neighbors and your neighborhood based on what stands out for them.

John P.
Kretzmann &
John L.
McKnight of
Northwestern
University's
Institute for
Policy Research
are credited
with developing
***Asset-Based
Community
Development
or ABCD.***



A revealing question to ask is how people travel through the neighborhood. What are the common walking or biking routes? Which way do kids travel to get to school? Ask neighbors to put this on their map and then compare the different maps. Use this opportunity to create as complete a picture as possible of your neighborhood. This method can be an engaging way to encourage participation in your initial neighborhood enhancement efforts because the activities can be used to get residents to think of the neighborhood in new and fun ways.



The circle is a good arrangement for meetings because it allows everyone in the room to see each other.

A Needs Assessment is a more traditional way to collect information for your planning process. Asking residents for input on a variety of topics which affect the neighborhood can provide an opportunity for discussion. This approach can be used in meeting. Arrange the seating so everyone is in a circle. Ask each person to identify one issue or opportunity in the neighborhood. You can choose to go through the circle as many times as you have time for. After everyone has had the chance to contribute, go back and see if the concerns can be grouped or categorized into topics. Then go back through each issue and list the potential consequences of not addressing the problem. Most of the time these differences can be worked out, it just might take extra time. Provide a safe environment where differences of opinion are allowed so that everyone feels their contribution is valued, and seek to identify, even in the most heated debate, the areas of common understanding and agreement.

Issues to think about: This is not an exhaustive list, but it may provide a starting point for your brainstorming activity.

- Traffic Management: Where do conflicts arise and between which users?
- Public Facilities Service (lighting, sidewalks and paths, crosswalks, handicap access, etc.)
- Land Use: Is it balanced?
- Housing: Do you like the range of housing opportunities?
- Natural Resources and Environmental Protection: Are existing regulations adequate?
- Neighborhood Appearance and Aesthetics
- Historic Preservation
- Cultural Resources
- Public Safety
- Open Space and Recreational Opportunities



- Activities for Youth
- Business and Economic Development
- Noise

Working
with
BIG
groups

If the group at your meeting is large (over 20 people), congratulations! Breaking into smaller groups might make it easier to have a discussion with a lot of people. For instance, you can ask each small group to brainstorm issues and opportunities and then select an individual to share those back with the larger group. Exhibit C provides another sample brainstorming activity that might help assure good participation at your meeting.

Another type of analysis is the SWOT analysis. This type of analysis focuses on the **strengths** (beautiful old trees, active citizens, good schools) and **weaknesses** (inadequate park space, inappropriate zoning, crime or blight) in your neighborhood. It also examines the forces and events from outside the neighborhood that impinge upon it. These represent the opportunities (new grant opportunities, a new business) and threats to its future success (a planned freeway expansion, a polluting power plant). The method is comprehensive and assures a healthy balance of negative and positive discussion during this early phase of plan development. It is also an option that uses elements of both the asset-map and needs analysis.

SWOT analyses are used to evaluate the performance of all kinds of organizations including businesses; you may have encountered one in other areas of your life. In a business or a neighborhood setting, strengths and weaknesses are considered internal to the organization. These are the things that make your neighborhood unique and great and also what keep it from reaching its potential. Opportunities and threats are the external elements that will affect your organization or neighborhood. Ask residents to brainstorm items for each of the four categories, or use the sample brainstorming activity described in Exhibit C. To adapt that activity for a SWOT analysis, have one group brainstorm general ideas about the neighborhood and ask the second group to categorize

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
h List Items ...	1.	1.	1.
e 2.	2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.	3.

ist into
S's, W's, O's or T's.



Collecting Information

We have discussed neighborhood meetings as a good way to collect information from members of the neighborhood. You might find that you don't reach everyone in a big meeting, however. Some people don't feel comfortable speaking in a large forum; others won't be available during your planned meeting or won't have the proper transportation. Another way to collect information is through small **open houses** or with a **neighborhood survey**.

Open houses can be held in a neighbor's living room, or another easy to reach, informal location. Members of your committee could each host one for people in their area, or you might identify a block captain to take responsibility to talking to everyone on their block.

Surveys are not as personal, but allow people time to think about the questions and return them on their own schedule. The more personal interaction during survey distribution and retrieval the better. You will receive far more surveys if you deliver in person and commit to returning for them later. Preparing a good survey can take some time and effort. Avoid questions that lead the recipient toward a particular answer. Your planner can work with you to craft a successful survey.

Make sure to keep a mailing list of all the people who participate in this neighborhood assessment process. You'll want to know how to contact people to invite them to additional meetings. You might even set a date for your second neighborhood-wide workshop (about two months later) so that you can announce it while you are making contact with your neighbors.

Synthesizing Information

Once you have collected information through the neighborhood analysis you will, undoubtedly, be excited to start the process of writing your plan. However, an important step remains, and that is the review of existing policies so that you understand the City-wide goals, policies and regulations surrounding your identified issues. Without a clear understanding of what exists, you won't be able to develop the neighborhood specific objectives that will comprise your plan. Your neighborhood planner will be an important resource for this effort. They can provide guidance for navigating existing regulations, policies and plans.



Next, ask your neighborhood planner to identify the sections of the Comprehensive Plan, the Community Development Code and/or the City Code that relate to the subject areas identified in your neighborhood assessment. If the subject involves other municipalities or governmental organizations, ask your Planner to identify the codes or plans that might apply. Then, assign a committee member to read the information provided for each subject area.



Ask questions of the Planner and make sure you understand how the City or other organizations approach this issue. Then, you will be ready to write your plan.



ANOTHER FUN PROJECT

Involve youth in your planning process!

You might choose to invite the young residents from the neighborhood to attend the neighborhood-wide meeting and have a board member lead them through a process in a separate room. With kids, asset mapping works well. Ask them to draw a map of the neighborhood as it is now, noting important land marks and how they travel to get places. Or, ask them to draw the neighborhood that they envision in the future. What would the neighborhood look like if they were to come back in 20 years? (Be sure to ask them how old they will be then.) Ask them what things they would like to see happen in the neighborhood. Their drawings and ideas will be a great addition to your plan. Provide disposable cameras for older children and teens and ask them to take photographs of the things they like in their neighborhood and things they would like to see change. These maps and photos are a great addition to your plan. You might consider visiting the local school to conduct this process.



4

The Nuts and Bolts

Plan Organization

A neighborhood plan will consist of several parts, including an introduction, a vision statement, background and/or history sections, a glossary and subject area chapters.

There are six main parts to any plan:

- I. **Introduction.** This section explains the process that produced the plan. This section will mention all the people who have participated, list the meetings that occurred and describe the role this neighborhood plan will have in the context of other plans in Lake Oswego. It will explain the layout of the document and other information to help readers navigate the plan.
- II. **Vision Statement.** This statement illustrates the neighborhood's vision for itself. Everything else in the plan will expand upon and develop this vision. A neighborhood may want the vision statement to reflect key trends and neighborhood values. Sometimes called the Perspective or Character Statement, it could also contain a description of the features it would like to preserve or change. The vision may develop a probable or preferred scenario for the future; it may even be a narrative that explains how the neighborhood will look in 20 years. The vision should be comprehensive. It should include the neighborhood's vision for the location of land uses in the future, how the neighborhood would like to accommodate future growth, natural features to preserve, environmental priorities, design, landscaping, the supply of open space, economics, demographics etc. More information about this important section of the plan is provided later in this chapter.
- III. **History/Background.** This section provides an opportunity to provide detail about how the neighborhood developed over time. It can be very useful to understand the many changes that have made the area what it is today. It is also a great place to talk about current land uses in the neighborhood and provide information about the people who live in your neighborhood using census information. A map is a useful addition to the background section, to help readers understand the context for the rest of the plan. Include a description of the neighborhood's boundaries. Information about where to find data, historical research and maps is provided in the upcoming section.



IV. Character Statement. Similar to the background information provided in the previous section, the character statement is meant to share with your readers what is unique and special about the neighborhood as it exists today. A character statement can be a very tricky thing to create. You will probably need some help from your Planner. The City has established a process to help define the character of a neighborhood. Below are a few questions to help you begin:

- What do you like most about your neighborhood?
- Who lives in your neighborhood? Has the population changed over time?
- What makes your neighborhood different from others in Lake Oswego?
- How would you describe your neighborhood to someone who was lost? How would they know when they had arrived?
- Do you think that the character of your neighborhood has changed over time? Would someone have used different words to describe it 20 years ago? What has remained the same?
 - Think about the streets, the buildings, the topography, the landscaping, the way people get around. Consider the type of people who live here and how they interact.

V. Subject Areas. They are the meat and potatoes of your plan. This is where you present the information collected during the neighborhood assessment. The issue areas or groups of issues identified in the assessment will provide the unique subject areas for your plan. You might develop chapters around these: one for transportation, one for land use, one for natural resources, for example. Your chapters or subject areas may also have subcategories. For instance, you may wish to discuss housing as a subcategory of land use.

Each chapter will include information about the issues including existing conditions and relevant City policies or regulations, a statement about the neighborhood's goals for the future and a detailed explanation of the action steps required to make that happen.

VI. A Glossary of terms at the end of your plan can help explain the less commonly used terms that you might learn during the process of creating a plan. In the past, plan authors have put an asterisk (*) after any word that is defined later in the glossary. Typically the glossary is located at the end of the plan.



Sample Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
 - a. Background on the Lake Oswego Neighborhood Planning Program
 - b. Information about *YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD*
 - c. Location and Neighborhood Boundaries
 - d. Format and Purpose of the Plan
 - e. Process of Plan Development
- II. Vision Statement
- III. History
 - a. Neighborhood History
- IV. Character Statement
 - a. The People
 - b. The Built Environment and the Landscape
- V. Subject Area 1
 - a. Narrative
 - i. Statement of Existing Conditions
 - ii. Relevant City, County or State Policies and Regulations
 - iii. Projections for the Future
 - b. Goals
 - c. Action Steps (may include: capital improvement projects; traffic calming projects; City Code, Community Development Code or Comprehensive Plan amendments; regulatory programs; educational programs; neighborhood association activities)
 - i. What is the task?
 - ii. Who needs to be involved?
 - iii. When can it happen?
- VI. Subject Area 2
- VII. Subject Area 3
- VIII. Subject Area 4
- IX. Subject Area 5
- X. Conclusion
- XI. Glossary
- XII. Appendix



The Vision Statement

Your vision statement is one of the most important parts of your plan because it states the hopes for your neighborhood's growth over the long term. The rest of the plan is just the strategy for achieving the goals presented in your vision statement. The development of a vision statement is a good place to start the planning process because it gets participants thinking on a very broad level about what they would like to achieve through the process. Make your vision statement:

1. Comprehensive
2. Realistic
3. Easy to understand
4. Succinct

Good vision statements often use a strong flagship idea that bridges the key issues. Try to create an image for your readers of everything you want your neighborhood to be. Identifying the important words and ideas that express your vision will help convey your message to readers clearly.

Don't be concerned if the vision changes during the planning process as different people become involved, to achieve buy-in from everyone, you might have to remain flexible for awhile.

Writing Your Neighborhood Vision Statement

Start with the information collected during your community assessment. Identify the words (preferably adjectives) used most often by residents to describe the strengths of the neighborhood. Write them all down on a piece of paper. Also collect the words used to describe what the neighborhood wants to become in the future. Write these in a separate column. Next, see if you can categorize the words into groups based on common theme or meanings. Think of an image or statement which summarizes the ideas contained in each category. Use these, and see if you can create a sentence that incorporates those ideas and encompasses a basic vision that you think everyone would agree with. You can write more to elaborate on the basic point made in that first, powerful sentence until you have short paragraph that can serve as a vision statement. Bring the statement back to the larger group at the next community-wide meeting and ask for input. Make edits until you have unanimous support for the statement. Now you have a powerful idea that you can come back to if the process starts to get off track!



History and Existing Conditions – Where to Look

Knowing where you want to go requires also understanding where you have been. You might find it useful to collect demographic data and historic information to better understand your neighborhood. Staff from the Planning Division can help you find information, but there are other helpful sources that you may wish to consult on your own.

History

- Lake Oswego Library Oswego Heritage Council home.europa.com/~heritage/index2.html
- Original plat maps for your area are available at the Planning counter at City Hall.

Demographics (population, race, ethnicity, age, etc.)

- 2000 U.S. Census www.census.gov

Crime Statistics

- City of Lake Oswego Police Department

Maps

- City of Lake Oswego (talk to your neighborhood planner or visit www.ci.oswego.or.us/engineer/mapsforsale.htm)
- Portland Maps www.portlandmaps.com
- METRO www.metro-region.org/pssp.cfm?ProgServID=7

Transportation Information

- City of Lake Oswego Engineering – Traffic counts available on-line at www.ci.oswego.or.us/engineer/trans.htm

Structures

Clackamas County keeps information about the properties in your neighborhood including when structures were built, the size of structures, lot sizes, etc. Your planner can help you access this information.

City of Lake Oswego Policies and Regulations

- City of Lake Oswego Comprehensive Plan and Community Development Code are available on-line at www.ci.oswego.or.us/plan



Subject Chapters

Narrative

The **narrative** is the place where you set the stage for the goals and action items that will follow. It is a statement of existing conditions. Depending on the chapter, it may make sense to conduct a survey of existing conditions. That could include an inventory of housing types, a survey of the transportation system, an analysis of existing zoning, etc. Your planner can assist in the collection of this data and can help you create maps to display the information in a way that is easy to read.

Also included in this section is an explanation of any existing policies or regulations in effect. Is this subject one of the Statewide Planning Goals? Is it mentioned in the City's Comprehensive Plan? Are there City of Lake Oswego codes in place? Plan recommendations will have to take into account all existing regulations.

Goals

Each chapter should begin with a statement of the neighborhood's **goals**. Use this opportunity to put into a few sentences what the neighborhood would like to see happen in the future. Think of it as a mini vision statement. What is the neighborhood's vision for this subject? What would you like to see happen. How does it relate to the greater vision statement for the neighborhood? Is this goal realistic given anticipated growth and economic conditions?

You might find it challenging to write a goal statement that is different from those you see used in the Statewide planning goals or the City's Comprehensive Plan. Think of those as 30,000 foot goals; make yours specific to the things you would like to see preserved, added, removed or kept out of your neighborhood.

Action Items

The **action items** outline the specific project, policy or procedure, which if executed, would implement your neighborhood's goals. They could be recommended changes to the Community Development Code (land use related) or City Code (non-land use) to implement policy changes or to develop design guidelines that provide examples of appropriate and inappropriate methods and types of development. They may require inclusion in the Capital Improvement Plan and City Budget process to ensure that any action items of a capital or program nature are implemented. Priorities should be specific, realistic, result-oriented and measurable. You might want to lay out the steps for implementing that action measure as well. The more specific you can be, the easier it will be to implement your plan and to evaluate your progress over time, even with changes in staff or your neighborhood leadership. Your action measures should state clearly who is responsible for implementing that item—very often that will be a group of people and/or organizations.



? Questions to Ask When Crafting Action Items?

- ☒ Who is responsible for implementing the priority; City, neighborhood, or both?
- ☒ What kind of change does it require?
 - Change to existing policy?
 - City Code (non land use related)?
 - Community Development Code (land use)?
 - Is the change neighborhood-specific or will it be city-wide?
 - Change to existing City procedure (always city-wide)?
 - Physical or planning project (almost exclusively neighborhood-specific)?
 - New project for Capital Improvement Program (CIP) – City responsibility?
 - Neighborhood Enhancement Grant – partnership between City and Neighborhood?
 - Engineering or Maintenance on-going work – City?
 - Long Range Planning on-going work – City?
- ☒ Is it easy to understand?

You want your project description to be clear so that when someone else reads about it, they know immediately what is being said. It should be comprehensive enough so others know what might be expected of them.
- ☒ Is it achievable?

Your projects should be realistic, even if they require several years to implement or a substantial public financial commitment. You must also be realistic about changes that are projected to occur in the future. For example, what effect will population growth have in your neighborhood?
- ☒ Do people care about it?

Will you be successful gathering support for this project from people who have not been involved in the planning process?
- ☒ Is there support outside your neighborhood that might provide leverage?

The more support, the better. Think about other individuals or organizations that would be interested in seeing this project happen (examples: local watershed, trails or parks groups, land trusts, scouts, local clubs, faith organizations, local businesses).





Is the project:

- long term (10-20 years)?
- medium term (3-10 years)?
- short term (0-3 years)?

You might want to have a balance of all three in your plan.



Will it require a major public investment?

You might want to have a variety of projects in your plan, some which require a large public investment and others with little or none so you can see positive change right away. Quick wins will help to energize others in your neighborhood to get involved.

Prioritizing

Your neighborhood plan is a guideline for the future, but reaching it may require multiple actions today. After you have completed your plan, it is suggested that you create an implementation strategy that outlines how you see your plan implemented over time. The development of a “Top Ten” list of neighborhood priorities from the plan will be the main portion of your implementation strategy and will provide guidance for your association and for the City as to which project should receive attention first. Your implementation strategy should be revisited approximately every two years to keep it up to date.

Prioritizing does not mean removing priorities from your plan; it is simply a strategy for achieving results consistently and in a realistic manner over time. Your plan was written for the next several years, and it will take some time to implement all of it.

One way to prioritize your neighborhood priorities to identify the top ten is to conduct a voting exercise at a neighborhood-wide meeting. Use small dot stickers available at an office supply store for the activity. Give every participant certain number of dots (10 is a good number if you hope to identify a top ten). You can even choose to provide different colors with different meanings. You could provide 10 green dots and five red dots, allowing participants to vote for the 10 most important projects to them (green) and also the five they are least interested in (red). Or, have two levels of interest, providing 5 green dots each worth two points and 5 orange dots worth one point each. Allow participants to put as many votes as they wish on any one item. This way, if they really like a particular project they can put multiple green dots on it. There are a multitude of variations you can create with this activity, choose the one which works best for your group. Some groups have associated the dots



with a dollar value and asked participants to allocate the “money” they are given between the various projects. Activities like this can make this sometimes difficult task a little more fun.

A survey could be another way to vote if you think participation would be low at a public meeting. You could provide a list of all the neighborhood priorities from the plan and ask residents to prioritize the items from 1 (most important) to the end.

Think about creating a mix of project types in your priority list: long term and short term, policy and projects, high-budget and lower-budget. The ideal situation is to have a mix of different types of projects. If your action measures are all long term or are all expensive physical improvement projects, you may not see the quick action on your plan that you’d hoped for.

More Things to Keep in Mind

1. **Think about the future.** Your plan will be most effective if it correctly anticipates the changes that will occur over the next twenty years. Take the time now to create a realistic projection of what that future may bring. Your planner will help you find information about projected population growth in the region and in Lake Oswego. Ask real estate agents and mortgage lenders what they think the future holds for your neighborhood. Your plan must keep these in mind or it won’t be effective in helping achieve your goals.
2. **Think about people and housing.** Don’t forget the people in your neighborhood. Think about how to plan for their future. Will new people be moving to your area in the future? Will current neighbors move somewhere else? What about children? The elderly? Where are they likely to go? How will economics impact those choices? What will that change mean for the character of the neighborhood? Think about how to plan for the people who call your neighborhood home today and the people who may call it home in 20 years.



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Neighborhood Plan Acceptance

Neighborhood Approval

After you have a complete draft of the plan it is time for neighborhood review. A neighborhood-wide meeting is a good way to present the draft plan and seek comments. Making copies of the plan available to neighbors before the meeting might help to expedite the process. Prior to the final meeting, you may want to provide an alternative way for neighbors to comment on the plan (write in comments or email comments). This is another way to facilitate participation because not everyone will feel comfortable speaking aloud at a meeting with their neighbors.

If you have been careful to solicit input along the way from everyone in the neighborhood, final edits may go smoothly. However, new ideas and old arguments might come out at the final review meeting. Always fall back on your process. Remind people of the opportunities they have had to be involved, share information about the time and effort that has gone into the production of the plan and relay how you came to decisions on difficult issues. If your process was solid and decisions were made in a fair and diplomatic way, it will strengthen the plan in the end. However, you can also let them know about future opportunities to comment on the plan at Planning Commission and City Council hearings.

Schedule a second neighborhood-wide meeting and announce that date at the end of the first meeting. The second meeting will provide a final opportunity for input.

City Department Recommendations

It is a good idea to include staff from the Long Range Planning Division in your plan development process from the beginning. The neighborhood planner can help to assure that staff from various departments are invited to comment along the way. You will want input from the Planning and Engineering Divisions and others to make sure that your action items are not in conflict with existing policies or plans and that your action items are achievable. After the plan has the stamp of approval of your neighborhood and of City staff, it is time for final review by the Planning Commission and the City Council. Your neighborhood planner will escort the plan through this process and help to explain recommended revisions. You should expect at least five months for City review.



Planning Commission and City Council

Process Review. The first type of review your plan will undergo is an evaluation of the process taken to create it. Your plan must meet the following minimum requirements:

- At least four neighborhood meetings, noticed in writing or in person to every member of the neighborhood association, have been held for the purpose of reviewing the neighborhood plan.
- A draft plan was made reasonably available to all association members prior to review at a neighborhood meeting.
- City staff with expertise in subject areas addressed in the plan were given reasonable time to comment on the plan.
- The neighborhood association has voted, following the regulations for voting established in their by-laws, to support the neighborhood plan in its current format.

Staff will provide a report to the Planning Commission which explains how your plan meets the criteria listed above and will make recommendations for next steps. If your plan is ready, staff will recommend that the Planning Commission accepts your plan as meeting the basic requirements of participation and recommend its acceptance to the City Council.

Implementation. During the review of your planning process, staff will conduct a thorough review of your plan's recommendations. Staff will seek to understand how to implement your plan's goals and how the City should be involved. Their report to Planning Commission and City Council will also include an evaluation of the next steps required to make your plan happen. The purpose of this review is to establish the relationship between the neighborhood and the City in the implementation of your plan.

The implementation of your plan may require additions of neighborhood specific goals to the Comprehensive Plan (if similar goals or policies do not currently exist) or other changes to existing City policies or regulations.

The implementation of your plan may include seeking funding through the City's budget process. This is the time where the steps for implementation are made clear and decisions made about who will work to achieve which goals and how that will be done. The Planning Commission and City Council will decide, based on that information, how the City will participate in implementation.



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Implementing and Updating Your Plan

Monitoring Implementation

A plan is a living document, implementing it requires the cooperation of City staff, elected officials, Commission members and you. It may be a good idea to keep the Planning Committee together after the plan is complete to monitor progress on plan implementation, even if those meetings are less frequent. It is very important to identify a neighborhood association member who will serve as a liaison for each of your priority projects. Even if the project, program or policy change is something the City needs to do, it will help to have a Committee member who can communicate directly with staff about the project and then report back to the group regularly about its progress. Don't get frustrated if it takes longer than you had expected to see the projects, programs or policies from your plan implemented. Very often, projects are more complicated to implement than originally anticipated. However, if you stay involved, you can remain an important player in finding ways to circumvent roadblocks.

Updating the Plan

Just as with the Comprehensive Plan, it is important for neighborhood plans to be responsive to changing conditions and circumstances. A plan update may be required somewhere down the road.

Just as with the review of your first draft, a neighborhood-wide meeting should be organized to collect ideas about what portions of the plan require changes. Start with the vision statement making sure that it has not substantially changed and then go from there, reviewing your goals and policies and adding/changing neighborhood priorities as required. Just as before, participation by a wide representation of the neighborhood will be essential during your plan update.

Conclusion

Neighborhood planning is a powerful way to participate in the growth and preservation of your neighborhood. It can also be a fun way to meet your neighbors and learn from their varied perspectives. Enjoy yourself and happy planning!

